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Testimony for the Zoning Commission Roundtable for the review of
the Commission's Racial Equity Analysis Tool

Good afternoon. I am a resident of Ward 5, a mom, a grandmother, and a retired teacher. In my time as a teacher, I and my colleagues were held accountable for the impact of our work- would our students reach the annual growth targets? If not, we had processes in place to address this. Parents and students were included in the planning and implementation. We defined how we were going to implement those plans, and when would we revisit the effects of the changes we were making. We considered what other services a student or family might need to supplement our efforts. Then we analyzed if we were able to change the outcomes for our students, and continued to revise our work. This process of analysis, revision, implementation, and accountability was part of the systems and structures of the schools where I taught. Teaching is hard work, and adding this layer of accountability on top of the more general planning and teaching was, well harder. But it was important. It was *necessary*. In fact, it was mandated. But without it, nothing would change. With it, I saw students' outcomes change, and that was exciting and made the work worthwhile. It meant I was actually doing my job.

I often wish that the rest of the world operated with that kind of scrutiny and intent. I know that education is far far from perfect in this country. Inequities, especially racial and economic inequities are still rampant in schools, and more often than not outcomes for students of color are not improving. But there are some schools that are creating different outcomes for students, creating opportunities for change. This doesn't happen without systems of accountability.

The questions in the Zoning Commission's racial equity analysis tool are important, but what happens when the answer to those questions is, "Yes, more tenants and residents will be displaced" or, "Yes, there will be less truly affordable housing", or "No, this won't create more local jobs for people of color, won't create more opportunities to access healthcare"? There is no mandated accountability in the tool. This is a fatal flaw. Without it, nothing will change.

Something else that is lacking in the tool is any mention of requiring true participation from the affected communities, participation which in fact is, spelled out in the Comp Plan itself. "Those most impacted by structural racism are [will be] meaningfully involved in the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact their lives, particularly people of color." (Comp Plan 213.9) I am not a person of color, but I am here to stand with my family members, my neighbors, friends and colleagues who are, to say that the Zoning

Commissions' Racial Equity Analysis tool must include structures for accountability, as well as processes that will include real participation of the DC communities of color impacted by zoning decisions. Their voices have been silenced and ignored by a whole slew of systems and structures that have kept many of them impoverished, and continues to do so.

With the development of the Zoning Commission's racial equity analysis tool comes a chance to build a new future for DC residents. Reaching this new future requires *real* change, *structural*, *systemic* change, and that will require accountability, not just inspiring, aspiring words.

The Comprehensive Plan was passed 16 months ago, including all the language requiring racial equity analyses in all zoning and development decisions. During the intervening 16 months, many zoning and development decisions have been made without the benefit of racial equity analysis. It is time to get this tool in place, and to get it right. Now.

Thank you for your time.